

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A method of controlling communications with at least two calling party devices by a user of a called party device, said method comprising the steps of:

establishing a first call link between said called party device and a first calling party device;

receiving a call request to said called party device from a second calling party device;

placing said first call link on hold;

accepting said call request from said second calling party device to establish a second call link between said called party device and said second calling party device;

causing a message to be transmitted to said first calling party device while said called party device is in communication with said second calling party device, whereby said user of said called party device can communicate information to a user of said first calling party device without interrupting communications with a user of said second calling party device.

2. The method recited in Claim 1, wherein said message instructs said user of said first calling party device to hold.

3. The method recited in Claim 1, wherein said message instructs said user of said first calling party device that said call link to said called party device will be disconnected.

1 4. The method recited in Claim 3, further comprising the step of automatically causing
2 said first call link to be terminated.

1 5. The method recited in Claim 1, wherein said message instructs said user of said
2 first calling party device to leave a message.

1 6. The method recited in Claim 4, further comprising the step of automatically causing
2 said first calling party device to be connected to a messaging system associated with said
3 user of said called party device.

1 7. The method recited in Claim 1, wherein said message comprises a prerecorded
2 voice message.

1 8. The method recited in Claim 7, wherein said step of causing a message to be
2 transmitted to said first calling party device comprises the step of said user selecting one
3 of a plurality of predefined messages using an input mechanism associated with said
4 called party device.

1 9. The method recited in Claim 1, wherein said step of causing a message to be
2 transmitted to said first calling party device comprises the step of said user generating a
3 text message using an input mechanism associated with said called party device.

1 10. The method recited in Claim 9, further comprising the step of converting said text
2 message to speech.

1 11. The method recited in Claim 1, wherein said call links between said called party
2 device and said calling party devices are established through a packet-switched
3 communications network.

1 12. The method recited in Claim 11 wherein said call links are established using an
2 Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) Session Initiation Protocol (SIP).

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1 13. A communications device for receiving and controlling communications with
2 at least two calling party devices by a user thereof, said communications device
3 comprising:

4 means for establishing a first call link between said communications device and a
5 first calling party device;

6 means for receiving a call request to said communications device from a second
7 calling party device;

8 means for placing said first call link on hold;

9 means for accepting said call request from said second calling party device to
10 establish a second call link between said communications device and said second calling
11 party device;

12 means for causing a message to be transmitted to said first calling party device
13 while said communications device is in communication with said second calling party
14 device, whereby said user of said communications device can communicate information to
15 a user of said first calling party device without interrupting communications with a user of
16 said second calling party device.

1 14. The communications device recited in Claim 13 wherein said message instructs said
2 user of said first calling party device to hold.

1 15. The communications device recited in Claim 13 wherein said message instructs said
2 user of said first calling party device that said call link to said communications device will
3 be disconnected.

1 16. The communications device recited in Claim 15 further comprising means for
2 automatically causing said first call link to be terminated.

1 17. The communications device recited in Claim 13 wherein said message instructs said
2 user of said first calling party device to leave a message.

1 18. The communications device recited in Claim 17 further comprising means for
2 automatically causing said first calling party device to be connected to a messaging
3 system associated with said user of said communications device.

1 19. The communications device recited in Claim 13, wherein said message comprises a
2 prerecorded voice message.

1 20. The communications device recited in Claim 19, wherein said means for causing a
2 message to be transmitted to said first calling party device comprises means for said user
3 of said communications device to select one of a plurality of predefined messages using
4 an input mechanism associated with said communications device.

1 21. The communications device recited in Claim 13, wherein said means for causing a
2 message to be transmitted to said first calling party device comprises means for said user
3 of said communications device to generate a text message using an input mechanism
4 associated with said communications device.

1 22. The communications device recited in Claim 21, further comprising means for
2 converting said text message to speech.

1 23. The communications device recited in Claim 13, wherein said call links between
2 said communications device and said calling party devices are established through a
3 packet-switched communications network.

1 24. The communications device recited in Claim 25, wherein said call links are
2 established using an Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) Session Initiation Protocol
3 (SIP).